

28. PYROMELANA XANTHOMELÆNA.

Pyromelana xanthomelæna (Rüpp.); Sharpe, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xiii. p. 239 (1890).

No. 19. ♂ ad. Salisbury, Dec. 12, 1894. Upper mandible blackish, lower mandible very pale fleshy; iris brown. In stomach insects.

29. PETRONIA PETRONELLA.

Petronia petronella (Licht.); Sharpe, t. c. p. 481.

No. 24. ♀. Salisbury, March 14, 1895. Bill slate, lower mandible lighter; legs slate; iris light brown. In stomach young locust.

30. POLIOSPIZA GULARIS.

Poliospiza gularis (Smith); Sharpe, t. c. p. 482.

No. 12. ♂. Salisbury, Nov. 10, 1894. Bill dark slate; legs dark slate; iris light brown. In stomach small seeds. Native name "Nimba."

31. SERINUS ANGOLENSIS.

Serinus angolensis (Gm.); Sharpe, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xii. p. 367 (1888).

Crithagra angolensis, Sharpe, ed. Layard's B. S. Afr. p. 484.

No. 18. ♂. Salisbury, Dec. 12, 1894. Upper mandible blackish, lower mandible light fleshy; legs and feet pale horny; iris brown. In crop small black seeds. Native name "Chisha shásha."

32. ANTHUS PYRRHONOTUS.

Anthus pyrrhonotus (V.); Sharpe, t. c. p. 537.

No. 6. Ad. Salisbury, Oct. 20, 1894. Upper mandible black, lower mandible yellow, black at tip; palate bright yellow; iris brown.

XXI.—*On the Geographical Distribution of Sterna dougalli, Mont.* By HOWARD SAUNDERS.

IN the last Part of this volume (p. 99) a [?] was appended to No. 36, *Sterna dougalli*, in Mr. Whitaker's list of Tunisian birds, followed by an Editorial footnote to the

effect that the only grey Tern observed by Mr. Aplin was *Gelochelidon anglica*. For these marks of scepticism I alone am responsible. There was no time to write to Mr. Whitaker and receive his reply before going to press. A slip of the pen seemed not improbable, for the Gull-billed Tern is sometimes nearly white, and, when fresh, shows a rosy tint on the underparts; while it seemed very unlikely that the Roseate Tern should breed in Tunisia. The species was hardly known in any part of the Mediterranean: Mr. C. A. Wright had not obtained it in Malta; Prof. Giglioli could only enumerate three or four examples obtained since 1822 along the coast of Liguria; and the only Mediterranean specimen I had ever seen was one from the vicinity of Menorca, in Canon Tristram's collection. Add to these facts, that at least fifty birds, erroneously identified by accredited ornithologists as Roseate Terns, had come under my notice, and some excuse may be found for my incredulity.

To convince the unbeliever, Mr. Whitaker promptly sent over two beautiful specimens of *Sterna dougalli* in full breeding-plumage; one of these, as he had intimated, unusually white. Of course I wrote at once to apologize for doubting his identification; and he is to be congratulated on having made known a breeding-place which is not only new, but which also forms an important link in the chain leading to the haunts of this species in the tropics and the southern hemisphere.

It is a matter of common knowledge that the Roseate Tern was described by Montagu from a specimen obtained by Dr. MacDougall on the Cumbraes in the Firth of Clyde, and that the species annually visits certain portions of the coasts of the United Kingdom for the purposes of reproduction. It is an oceanic Tern, nowhere numerically abundant, and remains with us for a very short time, being the last of the Terns to arrive and the very first to leave, and the young are, consequently, very rare in collections. It is, moreover, unusually intolerant of interference, and if the Common Tern (*S. fluviatilis*) becomes too numerous in its favourite haunts, it yields, almost

without a struggle, and goes elsewhere. This has been proved by Dr. Bureau on the north-west coast of France. In 1890 I was surprised to find at Geneva and Lausanne examples which had been obtained on Lake Léman in May; and I assumed that these were occasional migrants, deflected from a supposed line of migration up the Rhone valley from the Western Mediterranean, where, as already stated, the species was known to occur irregularly. No one has yet obtained the Roseate Tern on the coasts of the Iberian Peninsula, the north-west shores of Africa, or in the Canary Islands; but it occurs in Madeira, as well as in the Azores. Passing westward, we find it in the Bermudas; the West Indian Islands generally, from the vicinity of Venezuela upwards; and along the east side of America up to Massachusetts; not on the Pacific side, even where the continent is narrowest. Returning to the eastern hemisphere, the Roseate Tern has been taken at the Cape of Good Hope and in South-eastern Africa; breeds in the Mascarene Islands, Ceylon, and the Andamans; can be traced by Tenasserim, Malayasia, and the Moluccas to Australia, and even to New Caledonia—its most eastern breeding-place; while it ranges along the China Seas to the Loo-Choo Islands, wandering to Hitachi, Japan.

Now it will be seen that there are two very important gaps in its distribution: no authentic specimens being known from West-African waters between Madeira and the Cape of Good Hope, on the one side, or between the Mediterranean and the Indian Seas on the other. But when—as Mr. Whitaker has shown—a colony exists on the coast of Tunisia, it seems not improbable that the line of continuity should be sought eastward, along the coast of Africa, and southward down the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. It is quite conceivable that the Roseate Tern may not *breed* on the islands of the Red Sea, because there, as well as at the Laccadive Islands and along the Malabar coast, we find—thrust in like a wedge—*S. albigena*, an allied species, which may prove inimical to *S. dougalli*, just as *S. fluviatilis* is, under certain conditions, further north. But it strikes me now that if a look-out is kept for the Roseate Tern along the Red Sea in April and

again in September, not omitting the Persian Gulf—for the bird may perhaps try the Euphrates Valley route,—we ought before long to learn more about the somewhat mysterious distribution of this species. Perhaps our northern birds may go no further south than the basin of the Mediterranean in winter. However, this penitential essay will serve to show how little one who has devoted his principal attention for five-and-twenty years to a group may know about some of its component species; while it may even stimulate some of the members of the B. O. U. who go down to the sea in ships, to lend their aid in taking away the reproach of our ignorance respecting the distribution of sea-birds.

While this paper was passing through the press, I received a letter from Mr. Whitaker, dated Feb. 29th, and containing the following interesting details:—

“Knowing the interest you take in Terns, I wrote the other day to Blanc, the naturalist in Tunis, asking if he could tell me anything further about *Sterna dougalli*, and he replied, confirming what he had previously told me of the species being common in summer in the south of Tunis, breeding plentifully on the islands there, and adds that he has never met with it anywhere in the interior of the Regency. He also gives me the following particulars regarding the breeding of the Roseate Tern, as noticed by him in South Tunis:—

“‘Like other Terns,’ he says, ‘*S. dougalli* generally nests, in company with others of its species, on small islands and not far from water; but, unlike most of the Tern family, instead of leaving its nest exposed, it endeavours to hide it as carefully as possible under any scrub-plants or long grass it may find available, sometimes making a tunnel-like passage or approach to the nest under the herbage. The nest itself is merely a depression in the ground, sometimes bare, at others thinly lined with grass-bents, in which (according to Blanc) but one egg is deposited. The eggs somewhat resemble those of the Common Tern, but are slightly smaller. In colour they are pale brown or yellowish-buff, with darkish brown spots, which vary very much in shape, size and distribution.’

“*Sterna dougalli*, Blanc goes on to say, is the least shy of all the Terns with which he is acquainted. He also says it has three different notes or series, viz., the call-note, the pleasure-note, and the alarm-cry. Having spent the last two or three summers on the south coast of Tunis, Blanc has no doubt had ample opportunity of observing *S. dougalli*, and ought therefore to be in a position to speak with accuracy about it.

“What I doubted was that only one egg should be laid in a nest; but on my writing again to ask him if he was quite sure of this, Blanc replied as follows:—

“‘Je vous certifie une fois de plus que je n’ai jamais trouvé qu’un seul œuf dans le nid de la *Sterna paradisæa* [*dougalli*]; dans les nids des autres espèces de Sterne deux ou trois, jamais quatre œufs; dans le nid de *S. caspia* toujours deux, jamais trois.’”

XXII.—*On a new Species of Honey-eater* (*Ptilotis spilogaster*)
from South-eastern New Guinea. By W. R. OGILVIE
 GRANT.

THE two specimens on which the present diagnosis is based have formed part of the British Museum collection for some years, but were wrongly identified with *Ptilotis filigera*, Gould [see Gadow, Cat. B. Brit. Mus. ix. p. 237 (1884)]. They are mentioned in the list of specimens under the letters “g” and “h,” the former being from the Astrolabe Mountains, the latter from Port Moresby, both collected by Mr. A. Goldie.

Specimen “f” of the same list is *Ptilotis visi*, recently described by Mr. E. Hartert (Novit. Zool. iii. p. 15) from the Mailu District, S.E. New Guinea. This is another very distinct form, most nearly allied to the larger *P. chrysotis*, found in Western New Guinea and on some of the islands off that coast.

Among the large number of specimens examined, no example from New Guinea can be referred to *P. filigera*, Gould, which is confined to North-east Australia and the Aru Islands.